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Let Us Both Open Our Societies

—A Summary Report on the Third South-North
Coordinating Committee Meeting, Seoul,
June 12-13, 1973—

Seoul, Korea

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INTRODUCTION

Following is the full text of a speech delivered by Lee Hu Rak, Seoul side Co-chairman of the South-North Coordinating Committee, at dinner on June 12 given for the delegates to the third meeting of the Committee, held in Seoul June 12-13. Also included is the contents in full of a special press conference broadcast via radio and TV in Seoul on June 14, 1973, in which Co-chairman Lee Hu Rak reported to the nation on the results of the third South-North Coordinating Committee meeting. His opening statement was followed by a question-and-answer period with members of the press.

Following is the full English text of a speech by Co-chairman Lee Hu Rak of the South-North Coordinating Committee (Seoul side) at a dinner for delegates to the third Coordinating Committee meeting on June 12, 1973, in Seoul:

Acting Co-chairman Park Sung Chul, our compatriots from Pyongyang and honored guests!

I think it a great pleasure and an important occasion that we of the south and the north are together again here in Seoul tonight for the third meeting of the South-North Coordinating Committee.

It is already almost a year since the July 4 South-North Joint Communique was announced.

However, I cannot but express my regret over the fact that there has been little progress in our efforts to improve our south-north relations.

The internecine Korean War that we suffered and the quarter century of total separation inflicted upon us, though compatriots, mutual distrust, misunderstandings, hatred and

suspicion to a degree that might exist between two entirely different peoples.

Indeed, there are too many unhealed wounds between us simply to let bygones be bygones. We can neither ignore our hard reality, nor forget the past overnight, saying "the past is one thing and the future is another."

As Co-chairman for the Seoul side, I would like to make use of this special occasion to express my general views on our south-north relations and ask ourselves what we should do effectively to serve the cause of our country.

To begin with, what I think we should exactly do is to eliminate the mutual distrust and misunderstanding that exist between our two sides, and replace them with mutual understanding and trust as the basis for our new south-north relations.

In order that we meet this demand, I suggest that our two sides:

—Faithfully observe the July 4 South-North Joint Communique as our national charter of peace;

—Positively cooperate for early conclusion of the humanitarian Red Cross talks and an early solution of the problems of separated families;

—Create the economic subcommittee at an early date,

and take appropriate economic measures contributing to the common interest of the south and north, such as:

- a) exchanges of businessmen,
- b) exchange of goods,
- c) exchange of scientific technology,
- d) joint development of resources,
- e) holding of commodity fairs in each other side's area, and
- f) permitting business firms to be stationed on each other side for business operations;

—And create the socio-cultural subcommittee at an early date, taking measures to provide common social benefits and contribute to the preservation of our traditional culture, such as:

- a) exchanges in academic and cultural fields,
- b) exchanges in sports areas and formation of single teams for international sports events,
- c) exchanges of film and theatrical arts,
- d) joint research and development of archaeology and national history,
- e) joint study for preservation of our indigenous language,
- f) exchanges of journalists and exchanges of resident correspondents to be stationed mutually in both areas,

- g) exchanges in the field of communication, including mail, telephone and telegraphy services,
- h) exchanges between social organizations and people; and lastly,
- i) exchanges in tourism.

My dear compatriots of the south and the north!

I would like to propose, here and now, that our two sides immediately initiate such exchanges and cooperation and thus totally open our respective societies to each other.

I am firmly convinced that this really is the short-cut to achievement of our prime objective of eliminating mutual distrust and misunderstanding, and of ushering in a new south-north relationship based on mutual understanding and trust. And for that reason, I am emphasizing once again that to open our respective societies to each other is the most urgent task in order to improve our south-north relations.

I am fully aware that the Pyongyang side has recently been talking of the idea of a package solution, such as signing of a peace treaty, disarmament, joint session of representatives of political parties and social organizations of the south and the north, and the like.

I do not myself deny the fact that these are issues that should be discussed between the south and north sometime in days to come.

However, I myself feel obliged frankly to express the fear that, because our south-north relations are marked by such uniquely tragic past as I have just mentioned, we may spoil the whole business, if we start discussing such issues outright, without first laying a foundation of mutual understanding and trust cultivated through measures that I listed above.

To say it again, I'd like to emphasize that totally to open our respective societies to each other through implementation of extensive exchanges in economic and socio-cultural fields first is indeed the most urgent task for us to accomplish in order to create a basis of mutual understanding and trust. And I believe that such an attitude will no doubt turn out to be an effective way to convince the entire people of the fact that we are truly committed to the improvement of our south-north relations.

In view of the hard realities of our country, there is no question that there is no other suitable way but to start from easier problems and go on to more difficult problems.

The future of our nation hinges on the titanic tasks to which we are now being committed. There is no reason why we should put easier problems aside and instead cling

to difficult problems, and thus obstruct the progress of our talks.

Acting Co-chairman Park Sung Chul and my compatriots from Pyongyang!

I do hope that, based on this spirit, we will be able to produce constructive results at this third Committee meeting that we are now holding here in Seoul, and thus contribute to the improvement of our south-north relations. And I also hope that your stay in Seoul will turn out to be a pleasant and rewarding one.

Compatriots of the south and the north who are present here!

Let us all toast the success of our talks, and the unification of our fatherland.

Statement at Press Conference

I would first like to give a summary report on what was discussed at the third meeting of the South-North Coordinating Committee, and then go on to answer your questions.

To begin with, the north Korean position at the third meeting remained unchanged from that which they maintained at the second meeting last March.

First, the north Korean side demanded that a peace treaty be concluded, with provisions for withdrawal of foreign troops, troop reductions and suspension of arms imports from abroad.

Second, they demanded that political negotiations be held between representatives of political parties, social organizations and people of all walks of life from south and north Korea.

Third, they demanded that the five subcommittees of the Coordinating Committee be created simultaneously.

Prior to describing my reaction to these north Korean

demands, let me tell you the four items that I raised for debate at the third meeting.

They were as follows:

First, I suggested that the two sides initially agree on the working rules for operation of the Coordinating Committee, the Executive Council and the Joint Secretariat.

Second, I suggested that a Joint Secretariat building be constructed in Panmunjom at an early date, to be used for various conference purposes by the Coordinating Committee. I made this suggestion because I felt that adequate conference facilities in Panmunjom are badly needed to support efficiently the functioning of our Coordinating Committee.

Third, I suggested that both the south and north sides faithfully observe all agreed items, eliminate the atmosphere of mutual distrust, and be honest with each other.

I had specific reasons to raise this issue. As we all know, agreements between the two sides have not been fully observed even after the announcement of the July 4 Joint Communiqué. Acts contrary to the spirit of the agreements have continued to be committed, as in the cases of continued propaganda broadcasts against the south, defamation of the south, dispatch of armed guerrillas into the south and

radio propagand a exhorting violent class revolution in the south.

I asked the north Koreans to be honest and frank because they have been bafflingly dishonest and insincere in handling armed guerrilla and other incidents. Each such incident was duly notified to the north Korean side, only to receive unchangingly dishonest and insincere replies in return. They have always claimed that those armed guerrilla incidents were all "fabrications" by our side.

If our talks were to proceed on satisfactorily, I told the north Koreans, both sides should be so honest and frank as to accept facts as facts, and express regrets for whatever misdeeds are committed.

I brought up the issue because I felt the credibility problem was an essential problem for the success of our talks.

Fourth, I suggested that the two sides first start with two subcommittees, economic and socio-cultural.

The Agreed Minute on the Formation and Operation of the South-North Coordinating Committee provides for the creation of five subcommittees. But it provides at the same time that "each subcommittee shall be created as the progress of the undertakings of the Coordinating Committee warrants it."

The prime reason that I suggested we start from economic and socio-cultural subcommittees was because the two subcommittees could cover fields where we could easily implement various exchanges and cooperation.

I told the north Koreans what we could and would do when the two subcommittees are at last created, and I am now going to let it be known to you, hoping that it will help you understand how ardently we want these exchanges initiated.

I told them that, when the economic subcommittee is created, we would implement

- 1) exchanges between businessmen,
- 2) exchanges of goods,
- 3) exchanges in scientific and technological areas,
- 4) joint development of resources, and
- 5) holding of commodity fairs in respective areas.

I also told them that, when the socio-cultural subcommittee is created, we would implement:

- 1) exchanges in academic and cultural fields,
- 2) exchanges in various sports areas and formation of single teams for international events,
- 3) exchanges in the field of film and theatrical arts,

4) joint research and development of archaeology and national history,

5) joint study for preservation of our indigenous language,

6) exchange of journalists and mutual stationing of journalists in the other side's area,

7) exchanges in the field of communication, including letters, telephone calls and telegrams,

8) exchanges between various social organizations and individuals,

9) exchanges in tourist areas, and

10) speedy settlement of the humanitarian problems now being discussed at the Red Cross talks.

The military question is urgent and political question is urgent too, but let us start from exchanges in these fields, which are closely related to the everyday life of the people in general, I told the north Koreans.

I emphatically told the north Koreans that to open our respective societies to each other through exchanges in these fields was perhaps the only means to make it possible to eliminate our mutual distrust, foster mutual trust, and cultivate an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

Now, I will tell you how I reacted to the north Korean suggestions.

In the first place, I made it very clear that I was not categorically opposed to the idea of a peace treaty.

However, I made it equally clear that the time for us to discuss the peace treaty was yet to come. I told them that a peace treaty could be discussed between our two sides when both have succeeded in cultivating an atmosphere of mutual trust, in which the people of the south and north are fully assured that once there is a peace treaty, there would really be no war.

To make it repeatedly clear, a peace treaty could come about when the two sides have amply proved through deeds that agreements between the two sides are observed at all cost, and when the people in the south as well as the north are thus at ease.

However, under circumstances in which even a minor agreement is not kept, it is out of the question that we hastily sign a peace treaty, knowing that it is directly related to the life and death of the people.

I told them once again that I was not categorically opposed to the idea of a peace treaty, but thought the time was not yet ripe for us to discuss such a grave matter.

In the meantime, I had to take note of part of the remarks of my north Korean counterpart, in which he said

that "if things continue to go on like this, it is feared that a 'two Korea' could become a fact."

On this point I expressed my fear that, judging from recent developments, north Koreans appeared to be pursuing a "two Korea" policy themselves.

For instance, I asked about the genuine intent of the recent north Korean drive to enter into formal diplomatic relations with nations which already have diplomatic relations with the south.

I also cited as an example that the north Koreans have recently been trying to enter various international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations that they have traditionally detested so much, despite the fact that the south is already a full member.

"Does not such an attitude of north Korea indicate that it is you, the north Koreans, who are in fact pursuing a 'two Korea' policy?" I asked the north Koreans.

To this question, the north Koreans simply replied that they were not pursuing a "two Korea" policy.

Next, I went on to the question of political negotiations between political parties, social organizations and people of

all walks of life.

I termed the north Korean suggestion unreasonable for a number of reasons.

First, I told them that the general purpose of such contacts could be achieved when the economic and socio-cultural subcommittees are created, and when our two respective societies become open to each other through mutual contacts.

Second, I also told them that we were expected to create the political subcommittee in due course, with the ultimate purpose of handling political contacts between our two sides.

Third, I told them that I felt it to be no more than a political slogan under the present circumstances to attempt "political negotiations" with people of various walks of life attending. I frankly told them that I thought it a dangerous idea simply to assemble a large number of people and let them talk idly about the problems of our country, if we were ever sincerely to pursue a solution of the issues facing the nation. I told my north Korean counterpart that the general purpose of the north Korean suggestion could be satisfied if our two sides at the South-North Coordinating Committee faithfully represent the genuine wishes of the people in the south and the north.

As you are all aware, the South-North Coordinating Committee is designed to function as a sort of a "midwife" for the birth of the subcommittees and other conferences. What is achieved by the subcommittees and other conferences is naturally entirely up to them.

I suggested for my part that we operate our Coordinating Committee in such a manner that it plays the role of a "midwife," giving birth to various conferences as well as subcommittees, without insisting on making all the major decisions itself.

If there arises a need for a political conference, I said, it must be dealt with by the political subcommittee after it is activated. It was my idea that the political subcommittee should be given the full latitude to decide on whether to conduct the proposed negotiations by itself or to activate a political conference for such negotiations.

In conclusion, I told the north Koreans that it was not political negotiations, as suggested by the north Koreans, but mutual efforts to set our Coordinating Committee on the right track, that we badly need at the present moment.

On the next question regarding the creating of five subcommittees, I reminded the north Koreans of the conversations we had had with our President Park Chung Hee,

as well as the highest leader of the north, on the matter.

President Park and the north Korean leader were in agreement on the need to start from easier problems first in order to make sure of success in our talks.

In that respect, I told the north Koreans that any such hasty idea of starting from military and political subcommittees could ruin the whole business. And furthermore, we could properly agree to start from the economic and socio-cultural subcommittees because our two sides are practically in agreement on the need to have the two subcommittees activated at an early time. It takes two to negotiate. And as long as there are fields of agreement as well as disagreement, we should be wise enough to start from the field of agreement. Other subcommittees would be activated in due course, as progress in the economic and socio-cultural subcommittees warrants it.

Basically, the north Korean idea was that the tension on the Korean peninsula was due only to rifles and swords. They said, "Let us drop our guns and swords, and there will be no mutual misunderstanding."

However, I told the north Koreans that I was looking at the matter from a different angle. "I do not buy your idea that if we drop our guns and swords, our mutual misunderstanding and distrust will automatically fade away," I told

the north Koreans, "I think, instead, that if we do away with our mutual misunderstanding and distrust, our guns and swords will become totally useless, and we will be able to convert them into spades and hoes."

This is an illustration of how our two sides differed on the basic concept of south-north relations.

We have our counterparts at the negotiating table and we are earnestly committed to furthering progress at the talks, so I do not think it proper to go any further into the contents of the talks. And I have thus far kept myself to a summary report on what was discussed at the third meeting of the Coordinating Committee.

I fear that there might be dissatisfaction over the fact that we failed to produce any agreement at the third meeting. But I do not concur in such a reaction.

As is understood by all of us, south-north problems are not easy enough to solve through one or two rounds of meetings. An agreement does not necessarily mean substantial progress in the talks and, on the other hand, lack of an agreement does not necessarily mean that there was no progress at all.

Our two sides succeeded in frankly and seriously exchanging respective views on major issues with which we were

confronted. And I am fully convinced that the results of the frank exchange of views will no doubt be conducive to future progress of our talks.

I am confident that we will eventually succeed in producing constructive results through our future meetings. We may let the position of one of our two sides carry in the end, or we may have to compromise our respective positions; that I cannot tell yet.

As Co-chairman of the Seoul side, I would like to make it clear once again that I and the Coordinating Committee members of my side will continue to exert maximum efforts to see constructive results of our talks within the shortest possible time.

Now, let me answer your questions.

Question: The north Koreans have recently been committing acts contrary to the spirit of the July 4 Joint Communique and other agreements, as seen in the cases of continued dispatch of armed guerrillas and reopening of propaganda broadcasts across the DMZ. Was there serious discussion on this matter?

Answer: There were profound and earnest discussions on the matter at the talks. There was also an offer from the north Koreans on the eve of the third Coordinating

Committee meeting through the direct telephone saying, "Let us cease slandering each other," and I instantly had given them my approval. Anyway, there were serious discussions on the matter at the meeting, and, once again, we obtained assurances that such acts would be stopped. So, I think what we must do now is just to wait and see...

Question: Would you tell us how the north Koreans reacted to our proposals—proposals to open our respective societies to the other side, to start from the economic and socio-cultural subcommittees, and to implement various exchanges?

Answer: I am afraid I can hardly relate the north Korean reaction, as it was, on a word-by-word basis. They simply insisted that we start from the military question first. They said that our proposal was good in principle, but then insisted on beginning from military problems.

Now, let me take a few minutes to tell you how I personally view the problems of our country on an overall basis.

I have a firm conviction that unless our two sides succeed in opening our respective societies to each other, and come to understand each other, there could be no solution to our south-north problems.

It is quite easy to talk of dropping guns and swords. However, unless we understand the systems, internal

conditions and the society of the other side, and unless our two respective societies become totally open to each other, it is simply impracticable to talk of dropping guns and swords.

"Let us drop our guns and swords, immediately," said the north Koreans. And I replied, "If we consider the realities of our country as they truly are, we can easily come to the conclusion that to talk of dropping guns and swords right at the moment is rather a sentimental and poetic expression than a practical suggestion.

Therefore, I think what is now urgently needed by our two sides is to make our respective societies become completely open to each other, if we are ever to improve our relations and thus expedite the long-sought unification of our country.

Question: Would you tell us if there was any discussion of the Red Cross talks? And if there was any, please tell us what was discussed about the matter.

Answer: Well, we did have discussions on the Red Cross talks in general terms. Our side suggested that both parties seriously cooperate with each other to see an early conclusion of the humanitarian talks, and the north Koreans replied that they wanted that too. As you will note, the seventh full-dress Red Cross talks are slated for next month, and we

will see how the talks turn out.

Question: You have already mentioned the issue, but may I ask you about details of discussions of the recent north Korean attempts to seek diplomatic relations with countries which already have diplomatic ties with our country? You said that you had expressed the fear that the north Korean themselves attempts were indicative of the pursuit of a "two Korea" policy. What was the north Korean reaction to that?

Answer: As a matter of fact, that was not exactly a topic of our recent talks. However, I invited the attention of the north Koreans to the matter because somehow the north Koreans mentioned a so-called "two Korea" policy while they spoke at the meeting.

I said that it was indeed true that we were on record against a "two Korea" theory and, instead, committed to unification, but, on the other hand, it was altogether true that things were not going exactly in that direction.

For instance, I asked the north Koreans if the recent north Korean attempts to establish diplomatic relations with countries which have formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of Korea was not aimed at fixing "two Koreas" as a fait accompli. Furthermore, I cited the north Korean attempts to enter a number of international organizations of which the Republic of Korea is already a member, and

asked the north Koreans if they did not think it proper to cease such attempts, if they did not really want our country represented in international society in the form of "two Koreas."

They simply answered that they were not going in that direction.

However, I have the feeling that, despite their awkward explanations, our press is somewhat dubious about the genuine intent of the north Koreans in this matter, and I think I should say that I am dubious myself.

The north Koreans said they were not headed for adoption of a "two Korea" policy, even if they were still trying to establish diplomatic ties with countries which already have ties with our country, and to enter into international organizations of which the Republic of Korea is already a member.

Nevertheless, I have the impression that the questioner seems to feel that the north Korean explanation failed to make sense, but I do not feel inclined to make a direct answer to the question.

Question: The Co-chairman of Pyongyang side, Kim Young Joo, was again absent from the recent meeting. Have you ever heard anything about him recently?

Answer: I have been officially informed that he is

still not well, and there was no more information given to me except that. I was told that he was sick in bed, and that was all.

Question: Would you please tell us the north Korean reaction to the suggestion that the working rules for operation of the Coordinating Committee, the Executive Council and the Joint Secretariat should be agreed upon at an early date?

Answer: Well, I really don't want to accuse the other side, nor intend to drive the other side into a corner.

But, since a question is raised on the point, I think I should be very frank in answering.

Let me first give you an illustration.

As we all know, a law goes into effect only after an enforcement decree is worked out.

Let us take a look at our Coordinating Committee. The Committee indeed has a "law"—the Agreed Minute on the Formation and Operation of the South-North Coordinating Committee—governing its formation and operation. However, detailed working rules for the operation of the Committee and the Committee's subsidiary organs such as the Executive Council and the Joint Secretariat, equivalent of an enforcement decree, are yet to be worked out. Naturally, I do not think the functioning of our Committee has been

normalized.

Naturally again, I was of the belief that if we were to run this Coordinating Committee satisfactorily what we should do in the first place was to produce detailed working rules and activate the Joint Secretariat.

Nevertheless, the north Koreans seemed to pay little attention to the matter, and confined their arguments to military and political questions.

As a matter of fact, our two sides have thus far succeeded, through behind-the-scenes contacts, in narrowing differences of opinion on all major points of the working rules, and the formal signing of approval between our two parties can take place at any moment. But the north Koreans paid little attention to the matter, and appeared primarily interested in political and military problems only.

I did strongly demand that if we were to normalize the functioning of our Coordinating Committee we should first of all agree on the working rules for the operation of the Committee itself and other subsidiary organs, as well as on the construction of the Joint Secretariat building, at an early date.

If there are no more questions, let me finish this press conference with a few more remarks.

It is my assumption that the next Coordinating Committee meeting will be held sometime around this coming September.

Until then, I think our two sides will take a deeper look at each other's position. And I think our recent meeting has turned out to be quite productive in that the two sides could make use of the occasion seriously to exchange our respective views on outstanding matters. And for that reason, I am hopeful that we will be able to make some progress when we meet again for our next Committee meeting.

I am not disappointed because we have not succeeded in producing some agreement at our recent meeting.

Agreement or no agreement, we will continue to press our points and, at the same time, will continue to listen attentively to what the other side says. It may take some time. But I remain determined as ever seriously to pursue our national goal—the goal of ushering in an era of peace upon this peninsula, and bringing about peaceful unification—with patience and sincerity.

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